

Preface by

Giancarlo Susini

A passage by the ancient author and famous historian, Livy, tells of a Roman consul - one Flaminius, son of the much more renowned and unfortunate notable defeated by Hannibal on the shores of lake Trasimeno, where his courage cost him his life - who in 187 B.C., ordered his legions to construct a road in the heart of Etruria, from Arezzo to the new city founded two years earlier in the heart of Cispadania, that is Bologna.

The attentive and therefore inquisitive reader will wonder: who knows what valleys that road must have beaten, what ridges and hillsides it must have climbed, and what passes it must have crossed to traverse the Apennines.

On reflection, it is a matter of identifying one of the many routes that linked the peninsula to the vast northern expanse and the plain that touches the Alps: for some time, historians – this book is about a passion for history – have been accustomed to defining everything that lies south and west of the Apennines as the 'first Italy', the Italy irrigated by the Arno, the Tiber and the Volturno, therefore the hearth where the first Roman Republic grew and took shape; whereas the other part of Italy, to the east and north of the Apennines, is defined as the 'second Italy'. According to ancient cosmography, the Italic peninsula was shaped like a trunk, stretching from west to east. The Adriatic Sea, which washed the shores of the 'second Italy', was *superum*, that is the 'top' sea, and the Tyrrhenian Sea, which represented the womb of the Latins and Etruscans, with some interference from the Carthaginians and the Greeks, was *inferum*.

Similar to the relationship between the roots below and the ripening fruit above, keeping the "first Italy" and "second Italy" orderly and under control was a complex and difficult task: the Ligurians had to be defeated in the west (not that far west as they only reached Mugello) as well as the Gauls in the north and east. In the face of so many wars, battles and ambushes, safe routes were needed to move wagons, infantry and cavalry. It is almost like listening to a general from one of our wars: soldiers must never be idle with nothing to do. Come on boys, dig, shovel, listen to the surveyors (they know how to find a safe path), collect the large stones and hew them...

So much interest in a passage written by an ancient writer, which poses huge problems in terms of knowledge about the land and calls to mind truly tormented pages of Roman history. Just the thought evokes fluctuating information in the minds of those who have studied: this is the historic outline illustrated in the first part of the book. And then, conversations between friends, remembered comments and the opinions of the elderly, the tenacity of folk stories (the 'Roman Road'), all fuel interest in a question asked with increasing insistence. Where did the consul set his men at work in 187 B.C.? If you think about it, Flaminius was not as fortunate as his colleague, Aemilius Lepidus, who in the same year built the road that was a continuation of the Via Flaminia (oh, dad's road!) from Rimini, along an undisputed, certain, unchallenged route, that still bears his name: Trunk Road 9, there it is on paper, a straight line from southeast to northwest.

Memories, testimonies and rumours resurface: here, there, and here again, archaeological finds are unearthed; enough data is collected to reveal a route. Geologists and linguists help by sometimes recovering the glimmer of a significant surviving reference in the name of this or that place. And so the search begins with

great precision: good heavens, what a lot of routes were trodden between the two versants in ancient times, truly a great many. However, some are more interesting than others: paving and carriageways lie within acceptable stratigraphies, on levels and profiles that allow agile transit; structures that can be satisfactorily dated. The extreme precision with which this work illustrates the many finds and remains uncovered on each site, drawing attention to the different morphology of the land, and thus allowing a hypothesis to be formulated, is certainly not its last merit (and perhaps it is only its first). It has yet another merit: its data is illustrated with precision, without using specialist terms so that any inquiring reader can understand the weight of the discoveries. Therefore, this work documents enough information to ensure current opinion is aware of the problems of the past, handed down and reviewed as the generations unfurl. This is because the opinions of the past lay at the basis of the need to

discover the history (or the stories) hidden in the ground: people's archaeology, meeting with success and frustration, inspiring new challenges without achieving one's own. Or perhaps achieving them after all.

This is not a history book – because history wants indisputable documents that can be discussed – however, it is an admirable and exemplary account of knowledge for history: yet again, the enthusiasts' keen knowledge has proved to be a precious gift to culture.

Giancarlo Susini

Professor of Ancient History at
the University of Bologna

Member of the National Academy
of the Lincei

Preface by

Marco Macciantelli

The idea of nature is more complex than commonly believed with a few pinches of understandable naivety. It holds a number of surprises. It is difficult to sever nature from man's intervention. From the inseparable relationship between man and the environment. From the relationship with culture.

This conviction is confirmed by the sensations working with others provide, where different roles come together thanks to a shared, passionate curiosity about the history of our territory, by Cesare Agostini and Franco Santi. It can be felt in the flow of the text and images, in the fabric of the story, which this volume sets forth in the detailed mosaic of its pages.

Yet again, a book (including this book the reader holds in his or her hands) is nothing more than an invitation to read. In this specific circumstance, it is an invitation centred on sharing a direct experience: an invitation to read a territory; to go to rediscovered places, with rhabdomantic intuition and silent and industrious patience, along routes still guarded by the shadowy secrets of our Apennines.

After a few steps, each will see that so-called uncontaminated nature can contain the traces and remains of a mobile and inventive man, our ancestor who lived just a few hundred or thousand years ago.

An experience that sees the involvement of a fascinating topic, that of historic road systems, in a plurality of routes impossible to put together within a narrow, or worse, unambiguous vision.

In fact, we are faced with a number of Apennine passes linked to medieval towns that mainly led to Rome or crucial crossroads with the Via Emilia.

Perhaps it is time to take a less distracted look at one of the most significant forms of our local tradition, dating as far back as the Roman era.

Parma, Modena, Reggio, Piacenza, Forlì, and Bologna were all founded by the Romans. They are all characterised by roads, roads have bestowed them with their present-day appearance. Roads that now prove not only to be a topographical fact but (by virtue of a certain frailty) places of important symbolic significance.

A road system that contains many layers thanks to the advancement of historic eras. A road system, the experts explain, shrouded in the mythical and fabulous character of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, not always recognisable in archaeological terms because it mainly consisted in beaten tracks whose traces have been lost under the vegetation or by changes in the more general conditions of the land.

Therefore, an open attitude is preferred, open and able to take in the wealth of routes that historically passed through our territory.

Hopefully – especially as regards those involved in culture and tourism and during the Jubilee - there will be more motivation, interest and effort to use the imagination to enhance the identity of Bologna and its surroundings, in relation to the tradition of these newly uncovered routes that lay, and continue to lie, within our area.

This is why it is correct to refer to the concept of a historical road system that involved Bologna, especially the Bolognese Apennines where it had a rich variety of consequences. An open variety, able to house the work in this

well-documented volume, of those tenacious explorers, Cesare Agostini and Franco Santi, who have uncovered stretches of paving along the ridge between Savena and Sambro - Setta, in Pian di Balestra, in the Municipality of S. Benedetto Val di Sambro, on the summit and slopes of mount Bastione and beyond, along the north-south axis between Bologna and Fiesole.

These sections of paved road run atop or near the ridge from mount Bastione to the Futa pass and then downwards towards Mugello. It could be described as a new pedestrian diversion.

Now, it is not for the administrator (who is inclined to express a fondness for the area he must safeguard), to enter the scope of technical or specialist discussion. It is better for others to do so and, within this same text, professor Giancarlo Susini, with the insight of involved knowledge, without preclusion for the continuous growth of empirical research, states he is open to an unbiased consideration which I find particularly educational.

Therefore, I limit myself to wishing that

historical and archaeological research will assume the same variety and plurality as the routes, in the hope that this approach will promote the itineraries brought to light during the past years in the province of Bologna in terms of culture and tourism.

The administrator cannot overlook the chance – propitiated by the work of Agostini and Santi, the authoritative words of Professor Susini, the sensibility of the Municipality of S. Benedetto Val di Sambro, together with the precious contribution of the Carisbo Foundation - to shine light on the historic evidence embedded in our area that cannot be ignored, and promote more active and direct contact with our great (and perhaps not always adequately acknowledged and exploited) environmental and recreational resource, the Apennines.

Marco Macciantelli

Councillor for Culture and
Tourism in the Province of
Bologna

Preface by

Luciano Poli

After twenty years of study, exploration and document research, this volume records a portion of history that in part belongs to our territory.

When a population, “the Roman Population” started the territorial conquest that went on to define the great Roman Empire, it faced the problem of crossing the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, which have always hindered links between the north and south of the country.

From this sprung the idea, later to become reality, to explore the land carefully for any traces that would point to such a route across an integral and uncontaminated environment.

A large area of our part of the Apennines was therefore excavated and analysed by our two fellow citizens, who with great tenacity and passion never gave up, even when

different (and perhaps overly superficial) interpretations provided by the experts dismantled their theories.

Thanks to the precious contributions of the L’Altra Romagna GAL and the authors-discoverers, our Municipality can now boast this much sought-after primacy, and hand down to history a prestigious document that allows us to almost touch and observe a portion in the history of a population which is perhaps not as far from us as it seems.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks (also on behalf of every citizen I have the honour of representing), to Cesare and Franco for their hard work and dedication, well illustrated and documented in this very beautiful book.

Luciano Poli

Mayor

of S. Benedetto Val di Sambro

Preface by the Authors

A memory, handed down by our ancestors, about a Roman road that passed up there, through Pian di Balestra, on the ridge to the left of the river Savena, was enough to arouse our interest. The closeness of our ancestral homes to the area made us decide to dedicate our free time to discovering the lost road.

Being neither ancient historians nor archaeologists, we were well aware of our limits, but we had the advantage of being extremely familiar with the area and its woodlands, as they were the site of frequent youthful excursions. It was this intimate knowledge of the area that convinced us that the straight ridge lying exactly along the Bologna-Florence axis may have been the chosen route for a transapennine road. However, there were no historic sources we could rely on to provide more exact indications or reassuring confirmation.

And then, Livy reminded us that the consul, C. Flaminius, had a road built from Bologna to Arezzo. This laconic information was enough to provide trust in its existence and the hope that we would find it up there, where rumour said it once passed.

Two years of exploration on the ground and historic research preceded the first discovery of a few metres of paving in August 1979.

We subsequently pursued with conviction our solitary explorations and excavations, to the encouragement of some and scepticism of others.

The months and years passed by quickly,

riddled with constant effort, economic burdens and hard work, either to reach the exploration sites on foot, or to excavate by hand.

However, the results achieved have amply repaid our efforts, in spite of the fact that the Authorities responsible made no contribution and we received no encouragement from the scientific world. Only our friends offered precious moral and material support and contributed towards helping to reach our objective.

All in all, we consider ourselves lucky to have identified and brought to light the road constructed by C. Flaminius after almost 2,200 years, hidden from the knowledge of historians and archaeologists by early abandonment and vigorous woodland growth.

They now have numerous remains to evaluate, and there is no longer need to wonder which route the Roman consul adopted to cross the Apennines. To them we entrust the results of our pastime, and we hope that these precious remains will be treasured by future generations so that they shall never again lie neglected below the woodland plants and trees.

However, if this was to occur, this book will be here to tell people where the road is hidden.

And thus, this famous aphorism by Aristotle summarises the story of our explorations:

“What is learnt from common sense and experience must be put before any theory, however well-founded it appears to be”.

INTRODUCTION

This volume has been published ten years after our first publication about this subject. At the time, we published the book “La Strada Flaminia Militare” to provide the latest information about our research and a brief summary of our first finds. We had not yet reached all our objectives and we could only rely on incomplete, although very significant finds.

Now that we consider our archaeological adventure to be complete, we have decided to put our entire story in writing, starting from the very beginning.

Therefore, this book wants to tell the complete and authentic story of our fruitful investigation that started in 1977 as a hobby, and which we continued with enthusiasm for over twenty years. Our aim was to find the remains of the transapennine road built by C. Flaminius in 187 B.C. between Bologna and Arezzo, as recorded by Livy in book XXXIX of his “History of Rome”: *“Now that the province was brought from a state of war into one of peace and stability, he built a road from Bononia to Arretium so not to have his men kept idle”*.

Now we have reached our objective, we would like to tell of our solitary explorations and record every find brought to light (not just concerning the road system), illustrated by numerous photographs and outline sketches. The continuity of the archaeological finds has been essential towards identifying with certainty a long stretch of the Roman road across the Apennines, and probably the rest of the route from Bologna to Fiesole, allowing us to formulate plausible hypotheses about the “diversions” created during the imperial age.

Our search was helped by a preliminary re-examination of the history of the Roman republic, with particular reference to the years immediately before and after the foundation of

Bononia (189 B.C.) and the year of the decisive battles against the Ligurians (187 B.C.) summarised in PART ONE. Our main aim has been to describe the progressive expansion of the road network, which occurred (as it always does) immediately after Roman dominion over the conquered lands was consolidated. We have also wanted to outline the political and military situation in northern Etruria and in Cisalpine Gaul in the year the Bologna-Fiesole-Arezzo road was built.

We also introduce the broader theme of the transapennine road system before and after the Roman era (PARTS TWO and THREE), in the area between Bologna and Florence, highlighting the determining influence rivers, ridges and natural passes have had on man’s movements during every age. Our research regarding the most commonly used medieval roads has helped us to confirm their substantial difference (in terms of construction and route) compared to the Roman road, while our considerations about the Etruscan-Ligurian track have allowed us to identify its route.

In PART FOUR, we continue the tale of our archaeological adventure (started in the preliminary chapter), describing our initial exploration and first discovery.

In PARTS FIVE and SIX, we describe in detail the finds made from 1979 to 1992, in the southern area between mount Bastione and the Futa Pass and between mount Bastione and mount Venere towards the north. We spent these thirteen years exploring the woods on the Tuscan-Emilian ridge at heights between 1,000 and 1,300 metres. This area is totally uninhabited and, therefore, extremely enchanting and mysterious. This woodland environment was always the most exciting to explore, as our guesswork was gradually confirmed by paving stones, kilns, castellers, the remains of Ligurian settlements, etc.

In PART SEVEN, we continue the account of the explorations and digs carried out from 1993 to 1998 on the Tuscan versant, south of the Futa Pass, where we found the best-preserved stretches of paved road. We also describe and document the casual find of the remains of an extremely ancient bridge during work to construct the Bilancino dam on the Sieve river, which told us where the consul, C. Flaminius crossed the river.

The archaeological evidence unearthed along the stretch of mountains from mount Venere and from the river Sieve, together with the morphology of the land, then convinced us of the southern route to Fiesole and the northern route to Bologna, described in PART EIGHT. Furthermore, by plotting the numerous place names of military origin along adjacent roads, we have been able to reconstruct the reliable “diversions” to the transapennine route used during the imperial era.

PART NINE, at the end of this book, describes a conference held in 1996 by Professor Ernst Gamillscheg from Vienna, about the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and his visit to the Roman road. We also pay homage to Victor von Hagen, recording his words of admiration about the magnificence of the Roman road network, and to Julius Caesar, quoting a number of regulations from the *Lex Julia municipalis*, issued by him in 46 B.C. These particularly appropriate regulations dealt with urban road maintenance and daytime traffic restrictions governing the transit of carts in the centre of Rome, and their relevance to the present-day is surprising.

“FLAMINIA MILITARE”: as named by us.

During our studies, we noted that no historian, Livy included, ever mentioned this road with a name that reminded one of its builder. In ancient times, it was sometimes referred to as the *Cassia*, because it was considered the transapennine branch to Bologna of the Rome-Arezzo-Florence (Fiesole)-Pisa consular road of the same name; or, otherwise, as the *Clodia* or *Claudia*.

This was probably an attempt to avoid confusion with the more famous *Via Flaminia*, which linked Rome to Rimini, built by C. Flaminius’ father in 220 B.C.

This need for clarity was undoubtedly noted by the modern historians who attempted to identify the 187 B.C. transapennine road before we commenced our research; they called it *Flaminia secunda* or *altera* or *minor*. (N. Alfieri, G. Uggeri).

We also realised it was not only necessary to distinguish the road we uncovered on the ridge left of the river Savena from the 220 B.C. road, but especially from the road recently conjectured along other ridges, and called the *Flaminia minor*.

Thus, we chose the name “FLAMINIA MILITARE”, in memory of the consul who has gone down in history as its builder and to underline that this road was built essentially by the Roman legions for strategic and military reasons.

TITUS LIVIUS
HISTORY OF ROME
BOOK XXXIX

(2)... "C. Flaminius consul, cum Friniatibus Liguribus in agro eorum pluribus proeliis secundis factis, in deditio-nem gentem accepit et arma ade-mit..... Translatum deinde ad Apuanos Ligures bellum, qui in agrum Pisanum Bononiensemque ita incursa-verant, ut coli non possent. His quoque perdomitis consul pacem dedit finitimis. Et quia a bello quieta ut esset provincia effecerat, ne in otio militem haberet, viam a Bononia perduxit Arretium.
(omissis)

M. Aemilius alter consul agros Ligurum vicosque qui in campis aut val-libus erant, ipsis montes duos Ballistam Suismontiumque tenentibus, deussit depopulatusque EAST Pacatis Liguribus exercitus in agrum Gallicum duxit, viamque a Placentia, ut Flaminiae committeret, Ariminum perduxit".

(2)... "The consul, Caius Flaminius, fought several successful battles against the Ligurian Frinates on their territory, accepting their surrender and disarming them... War was then waged against the Ligurian Apuani, whose incursions into the farmlands of Pisa and Bologna had made cultivation of the soil there impossible. The Apuani were vanquished, and the consul made peace with their neighbours. Now that the province was brought from a state of war into one of peace and stability, he built a road from Bologna to Arezzo so not to have his men kept idle.
(ceteris omissis)

The other consul, M. Aemilius, destroyed and burnt the fields and villages of the Ligurians who lived in the plains and valleys, whose inhabitants had fled to the heights of two mountains, Balestra and Suismonzio... After establishing peace in Liguria, he led his army to Gaul and built a road from Piacenza to Rimini to join up with the Via Flaminia".

PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

THE ORIGIN OF OUR STORY

1 - A summer conversation.

2 - The Roman coin that inspired us to start our search.

1 - A summer conversation.

Although it is very dull to attribute the origin of our archaeological adventure to coincidence, that is exactly what happened and we would simply like to tell how it began.

Only a casual meeting could have dragged two people, professionally involved in activities completely removed from historical and archaeological research, into an adventure that lasted over twenty years.

The upper valley of the Savena and the village of Castel dell'Alpi with the lake formed in 1951 after a vast and deep landslide that blocked the course of the river.



It all sprung from a conversation we had one August evening in 1977 in Castel dell'Alpi¹.

We already knew each other by sight because our families are from that same village, where they settled over ten generations ago; however, we had never spent time in each other's company because we both now lived in Bologna and were tied up with our respective jobs.

The only time of year we ever saw each other was during the summer holidays, usually in one of the few bars in Castel dell'Alpi, where the conversation almost always slipped into football, motorcar racing and sport in general; other topics were rarely discussed and if they were, conversation ran dry after only a few exchanges.

And so, one summer after another, the summer of 1977 arrived.

Almost every evening on the first days of August, we would end up in front of the usual bar, seated at a table, chatting about the usual things, sometimes vivaciously. However, one evening, while we were enjoying the pleasant breeze from the lake, the conversation took a completely different turn: the unknown and remote origins of Castel dell'Alpi, the devastating landslides, old and recent, that have radically muted the orography of the valley, lowering the surrounding mountains, carrying away and destroying entire villages.

We talked about villages that disappeared centuries ago, about the ruins scattered here and there, all destroyed with force and perhaps burnt down by the notorious Marchesino Lupo and his band of thieves in 1301. Someone mentioned the famous pole factory for making lances, manufactured with *fraxinus ornus* (flowering ash, locally known as "ornello"), which still grows along the hedgerows today, rare testimony of ancient and much larger cultivations: excellent wood, light, resistant good for making a lance, spike or "partigiana"².

However, the main topic that kept us talking into the small hours was the ancient road network, if that intricate network of footpaths

and mule tracks that linked the solitary houses and small villages scattered over the entire valley could be described as such.

Therefore, speculating about the stories handed down by word of mouth by our ancestors, the topic reached further and further into the past, as far back as the Roman era. We remembered that our fathers had told us that centuries ago, our ancestors travelled along a *Roman* road that crossed the Apennines on top of the ridge that runs in a straight line southwards towards Tuscany and northwards towards Bologna, to the left of the river Savena.

Could this be a figment of the imagination of solitary transapennine wayfarers who needed reassurance that they were travelling along a very ancient, tried and tested route, or could it really be the undying memory of a Roman road?

We were unable to provide these questions with an answer.

Our only certainty was that we had never seen the remains of a Roman road (as illustrated in archaeology books) on the ridge we had trodden countless times since we were boys (or more recently for work or straightforward walks); all we had ever come across was one of the many mule tracks that, until a few decades or so ago, connected the more remote villages.

This mule track is exactly the same as every other. Its bed is in utter disarray; it has sunk below the level of the fields and woods to the extent that it looks like the bed of a stream. No more than two metres wide, in some places, it is impenetrable due to the wild growth of the hedgerows. However, in spite of this, there is something different about it, which gave us the impression of it being a much more important road than the others, considering:

- a) it winds for tens of kilometres, exactly following the top of the north-south ridge without any significant differences in level, from Emilia to Tuscany across the backbone of the Apennines;
- b) the track is mainly straight, (like the ridge), except for a few modest detours, clearly

¹ Castel dell'Alpi is in the Municipality of S. Benedetto Val di Sambro (in the province of Bologna), located almost at the source of the river Savena, 737 metres above sea level near the Tuscany-Emilia border. It is a summer holiday village enhanced by a charming natural lake where it is possible to go fishing and canoeing.

² A "partigiana" was a lance with a long point used by infantrymen in the Middle Ages.

required to overcome natural obstacles (landslides and rock falls that have gradually taken place since ancient times);

- c) for fifteen kilometres, this stretch of track between Emilia and Tuscany does not pass through any villages. It only passes by three farmhouses, distant from each other and linked to the villages at the bottom of the valley by steep and tortuous mule tracks along the mountain slopes.

Evidently, the role of this mule track was to cross the backbone of the Apennines; that is link the Bolognese side of the mountains to the Florentine side. It was obviously used for long-distance journeys even in ancient times.

The other numerous mule tracks have a very different pattern: always tortuous with steep differences in level, they form a network linking individual villages and often end in the villages they reach, thus confirming their role as part of the local road network.

In the face of these differences, well known to us due to our capillary knowledge of the area, we

agreed that the name *Roman* given to the road by our ancestors could derive from its actual use during the Roman era.

2 - The Roman coin that inspired us to start our search.

During this conversation, Franco Santi mentioned that two years earlier, at the bottom of a crack in an outcrop of sandstone in a centuries-old quarry near Castel dell'Alpi, he had found a well-preserved coin portraying the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus on one side, and an eagle on a perch with the word "ROMA" on the other ³.

He found the coin during a trip to the quarry that he sometimes used to extract sandstone needed for his job⁴.

The coin fired his imagination; however, one idea in particular stuck in his mind and it was linked to that so-called *Roman* road.



Bronze coin dating back to 320-268 B.C. minted in Capua and found by Franco Santi in a crack in a sandstone quarry near Castel dell'Alpi, on the eastern slopes of mount Bastione. One side portrays the she-wolf with her head turned towards the suckling Romulus and Remus. The other portrays an eagle on a perch and the words ROMAE.

³ A bronze coin minted between 320 and 268 B.C. in Capua.

⁴ Franco Santi is a stonemason specialised in the construction of sandstone fireplaces, who often quarries sandstone from the various local outcrops. After shaping the raw material, he makes square blocks of different shapes and sizes, which he then uses. To detach the large sandstone blocks from the outcrop, he inserts iron wedges in various points of the numerous cracks found in this type of sandstone. He then strikes the wedges with a hammer, driving them into the crack until the rock stratum breaks. It was while carrying out this process, when the sandstone block split open, that he found the coin at the bottom of a crack.

The thread of logic was simple: if a coin dropped in that crack, the person who lost it was probably someone who was quarrying the stone during the Roman era. The stone could have been used to construct buildings or bridges, or to pave important roads. It was this thought that induced us to consider with less scepticism that the Romans may have constructed a paved road on top of the ridge on Pian di Balestra and mount Bastione. However, because we had never seen the remains of any paving stones, we did not know whether to believe or disbelieve this suggestive theory. In any case, the fact that there were no visible remains did not prove that a paved road did not exist, seeing as it was obvious that in two thousand years, natural events (rock falls, landslides, erosion, etc.) and the centuries-old sedimentation of leaves, branches and earth could have hidden any ancient remains from human eyes. We also believed that if a paved road *had* been constructed along tens of kilometres, some sort of remains must still exist, and surely, a careful and rational exploration would uncover them. It would have been much more difficult, or even impossible, to find traces of the road if it had been made of beaten earth or gravel (a *glarea* road); but the coin found in the

sandstone quarry made us hope that the quarried stones had been used to build the road, at least where the nature of the soil demanded paving.

This conviction became so rooted in our minds that we ended our first meeting with a promise to meet again to draw up a work schedule that would take into account the amount of free time we could dedicate to the search.

This decision was further helped by the fact that we had two advantages:

- the proximity of the area to explore to our homes in Bologna and our summer homes in Castel dell'Alpi;
- our first-hand knowledge of the area, where we spent time and which we had explored during our youth and adult years.

Our scant historic knowledge persuaded us to study Roman and medieval history (especially as concerned events in our local area), in the hope that we would find useful evidence and proof. The only information we had was vague, seeped in imagination and based on local folklore. However, local folklore was always univocal in handing down the memory of a very ancient Roman route⁵ on the ridge to the left of the Savena.

⁵ This tradition is so deeply rooted that, with resolution 25 dated 25 January 1969, the Municipal Council of S. Benedetto Val di Sambro agreed to call the road that runs through Madonna dei Fornelli (exactly along the north-south ridge between the rivers Savena and Sambro from north to south "*via Romana Antica*" [Ancient Roman Road] .

PART ONE

THE ROMAN CONQUESTS FROM THE END OF THE 4TH CENTURY B.C. TO 187 B.C.

Historical Outline

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

To fully understand the reasons that induced the Romans to construct the road we decided to search for, it is fundamental to have at least a general idea of the overall extension of Roman domination at the time, the events that preceded this era and above all, the boundaries in the north of Italy at the start of the 2nd century B.C.

When analysing an event handed down to us by ancient history, regardless of whether it is of a military, political or technical nature, it is vital to look at the overall historic context in which the event took place, because its context can provide illuminating clarifications.

In terms of our research, this road was constructed and then fell into decline due to strategic and military reasons.

In general, Roman roads call to mind the grandiose road network that existed during the imperial age. In the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., when the Roman Empire underwent its maximum expansion, there were thousands and thousands of kilometres of paving; after all, the borders of the empire reached the north of England, northern and eastern Europe, every country in the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, north Africa, etc. This is perhaps because, although we are taught about the republican age at school, attention tends to be focussed on the imperial

age; on those enthralling events that represent the apex of Roman political and military power, from the point of view of territorial expansion and economic power.

However, the period of Roman history involved in our research starts at the beginning of the 2nd century B.C., in the midst of the republican age, when Rome was still consolidating its dominion in northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul). We have wanted to re-read Roman history from the end of the 4th century B.C., focussing attention on the immediate and direct consequences of the Roman conquests: the political and military organisation of conquered territories thanks to the foundation of Latin colonies, the constitution of municipia and the construction of roads to the capital.

We believe it is useful to outline the most important events in the gradual expansion of Roman domination from the end of the 4th century B.C. to the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. (that is, up to the moment when the road in question was built) for the benefit of those readers who do not have specific knowledge of this period in history.

CHAPTER I

THE EXPANSION OF ROMAN DOMINATION FROM THE END OF THE 4TH CENTURY B.C. TO 200 B.C.

1 - The conquest of central and southern Italy (340-264 B.C.).

1.1 - The Latin war (340-338 B.C.).

1.2 - Municipia and Latin colonies.

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1.4 - The second Samnite war (327-305 B.C.) and construction of the first consular roads.

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2 - The first Punic war (263-241 B.C.) and the conquest of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.

3 - Start of the invasion of northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul) in 222 B.C. and the second Punic war (218-202 B.C.).

1 - The conquest of central and southern Italy (340-264 B.C.)

1.1 - The Latin war (340-338 B.C.)

After Rome was sacked in July 390 B.C. by the Senone Gauls, who then immediately withdrew northwards to join with other Gallic tribes, the Romans consolidated their defences by constructing massive walls around the Capital.

At the time, Roman dominion covered about 1,500 square kilometres. The Romans were surrounded in the south and east by mainly hostile Italic populations; their relations with the Etruscans, who occupied the north, were based on mutual tolerance; however, both sides kept a watchful eye on each other.

In 340 B.C. the Latins, Campani, Volsci and Aurunci formed an alliance and started a war (the so-called Latin war) against Rome. Thanks to the help of the Samnites, they were defeated by the Romans.

Following this victory, Rome forced their defeated enemies to become Roman citizens or allies and occupied their lands.

1.2 - The municipia and Latin colonies.

At this point in history, the Romans made

a fundamental political choice regarding the fate of the populations they defeated, a choice that proved to be their winning card in future conquests.

It must be said that the Romans did not destroy the populations they defeated, neither did they crush them under their authority or military organisation, nor did they reduce them to slavery. Instead, they adopted a substantially “soft” policy, which they readily adapted according to the situation, the aim being to annex the new populations to the Roman State and thus increase Roman territorial and military power.

It is well known that during the Italic wars, the Romans carried out massacres (for example against the Aequi), reduced their prisoners to slavery and confiscated land from any population who opposed them with force. However, once conquered, these populations were subjected to “soft” conditions, in other words, these conditions ensured significant benefits for the defeated¹.

Trust in this benevolent organisation spurred some Italic populations to form a spontaneous alliance with the Romans (thus avoiding the consequences of certain defeat and also retaining their internal independence)

¹ This policy was always adopted by the Romans, even in later eras. Polybius' criticism of the Carthaginians is significant (Polybius: Histories, book X, paragraph 37) because during the second Punic war,

and offer military aid to Rome. In line with this policy, some Latin cities were incorporated into the Roman state and their citizens became Roman citizens. Other Latin cities maintained their independence with the right to carry out "*conubium*" and "*commercium*" with Roman citizens, but they had to give up part of their land and were forced to make an alliance with Rome, undertaking to provide the Romans with military aid if necessary.

The Campani, Volsci, Aurunci, etc. were completely incorporated into the Roman state with limited rights of citizenship (*civitas sine suffragio*). This meant that they had to pay taxes and provide military service, but they did not have the right to vote during assemblies, nor could they cover any position of responsibility in Rome.

This form of limited citizenship granted to defeated populations allowed Rome to increase its dominion and population, and become progressively more powerful. By integrating conquered populations, Rome did not fear that they would develop ideas about becoming an independent state, considering that in practice, they maintained their identity and continued to govern themselves. These communities with Roman citizenship became to be known as *municipia*.

At the same time, large areas of land expropriated from people forced to enter in an alliance with Rome were colonised. Proletarian Romans created settlements and were assigned arable land. They could establish independent communities with the right to carry out *conubium* and *commercium* with Romans, but they had to renounce Roman citizenship, pay taxes and comply with military obligations.

These *colonie latine*, granted the same rights and duties imposed on the defeated Latin cities, were established in strategic positions, near the borders of Latium, so they could also act as military garrisons for the safety of Rome itself.

The Latin colonies, autonomously organised

but closely linked to Rome, were, together with the municipia, Rome's strongpoint in its expansion in Italy and the Mediterranean.

When first founded, the Latin colonies were the outposts in Rome's territorial expansion and mainly acted as military garrisons. Later, as the dominion of the Republic spread, and consequently Rome's borders became more distant, the Latin colonies developed into hardworking colonies, dedicated to agriculture, artisanship and trade.

1.3 - Roads.

The other strongpoint of republican Rome was the construction of an efficient and rational road network, which quickly connected the recently founded municipia and Latin colonies to the Capital.

A road network must have already existed before the Romans arrived in the areas inhabited by the populations they defeated. However, these roads were much more modest in size and at times, they were only sheep tracks, mule-tracks or footpaths that had formed naturally due to the constant passage of men and animals travelling from one village to another. They had not been created to cover large distances, also because the local populations (who were often at odds with each other) had no interest in doing so.

However, the Romans (who wanted to create fast connections between the Capital and its conquered lands), constructed straight roads which headed directly towards their destination. They did not consider the pre-existing and modest road system, unless it coincided with the route of their road.

The ability to send messages quickly, armies or goods to any part of its dominion was the winning strategy of the Romans compared to other populations.

Their road system allowed them to win decisive battles and affirm

in Spain, they treated the defeated Iberians badly: "After the Carthaginians had defeated the Roman armies and killed both the commanders, Gnaeus and Publius Scipio, they believed they had unquestionably secured Iberia for themselves. The Carthaginians treated the native population haughtily and thus they were seen as enemies instead of loyal allies. This was inevitable because the Carthaginians thought that the method by which power is acquired is different from the method by which it is maintained. They had not realised that the people who preserve what they have conquered best are those who uphold the same conduct and principles by which they originally won it. It is well known and evident that those who maintain power over their subjects are those who offer benefits and the prospect of a splendid future. However, if, after they have achieved their supremacy, they behave with hostility and ill treat the defeated and act overbearing, the sentiments of their subjects will also change. This is what now happened to the Carthaginians".

their domination on the known world of the time².

Livy and Polybius often tell how this or that consul, involved in campaigns distant from the Capital, sent fast messengers (*nuntii*) to the Senate in Rome for orders, or authorisation to continue the war after their mandate had expired, or requests for urgent military aid to face the enemy in moments of uncertainty.

These predicaments underlined the importance of direct and perfectly maintained roads, with frequent stopping places equipped with all the facilities required by messengers (*mutationes* and *mansiones*).

Obviously the first extra-urban Roman consular roads were simply covered in gravel and were only paved where required by the soil (on steep slopes, in muddy areas, on high mountains, etc.); this simple layer of gravel (*glarea strata*) allowed the road to be completed quickly, making connection with the most remote colonies, in direct contact with the enemy, as fast as possible.

1.4 - The second Samnite war (327-305 B.C.) and construction of the first consular roads.

Following the victorious Latin war, which ended in 338 B.C., the Romans founded the first two colonies in the south: Cales in 334 B.C. near the river Volturnus and Fregellae in 338 B.C. in the valley of the Liris, near Terracina, also founded in 327 B.C.

This penetration into Samnium sparked the hostility of the local populations who started a war in 327 B.C. which more or less continued until 305 B.C. (the second Samnite war).

During the conflict, the Greek government ruling Naples gave the Roman garrisons a friendly welcome. This initial contact with one of the Greek populations that had settled in Italy encouraged the start of important alliances for Rome.

In the alternating won and lost battles (for example the defeat at the Forche Caudine in 321 B.C.), overall, the Romans managed to beat cities back the Samnites in spite of being attacked from the north at the same time by Etruscan and

Umbrian

As the Romans gradually recaptured the areas taken from the Samnites on the southern front (for example the colony of Fregellae), they founded new colonies, such as Sessa Aurunca in 313 B.C. on the Fregellae-Cales axis, and in the same year, Saticula (respectively north and south of Capua).

In 312 B.C., the censor, Appius Claudius "*the Blind*" started to build the most classic of the Roman roads along this route, the Via Appia (it reached Capua), designed to supply rapid military aid to the new colonies on the Samnite front, still at war and just 150-200 km from Rome.

Although they were still busy fighting the Samnites, the Romans attempted to consolidate the safety of the Capital by fighting against the populations from the central Apennines to the east.

They easily subdued the Abruzzi populations (Marsi, Peligni, Marrucini, etc.) who became their allies. However, they annihilated the Aequi for putting up strenuous resistance.

Immediately after these military successes, the Romans founded the colony of Sora (303 B.C.) in the land of the Marsi to the northeast of Fregellae and Alba Fucens (303 B.C.) near present-day Avezzano, in the land of the Peligni.

In the meantime (306 B.C.) they started to build the Via Valeria, which passed through Tivoli and headed towards Alba Fucens.

They then turned their attention to the Umbrians and in 299 B.C., founded the colony of Narni.

The start of the 3rd century B.C. saw the Romans fighting against the Umbrians in the north (they formed an alliance with the Etruscans and Gauls, who had occupied the Adriatic side of the Apennines) and against the Samnites who had restarted hostilities in the southeast. The Etruscan, Umbrian and Gaul coalition was defeated in the battle of Sentino (295 B.C.) and in 290 B.C., the Samnites accepted Roman rule, after the colony of Venosa was established on their territory in 291 B.C.

² The Romans carried out a daring enterprise during the battle of Metaurus in 207 B.C. where they defeated and killed Hasdrubal. To prevent Hasdrubal's army from joining forces with Hannibal's army, they first challenged Hasdrubal's army by marching four-hundred kilometres, from the river Ofanto to Senigallia, in just seven days with six thousand foot soldiers and one thousand cavalrymen.



Plate 1

Roman dominion in Central Italy during the first decades of the 3rd century B.C. and the Latin colonies.

Following the victory of Sentino, the Romans took control of Etruria, Umbria and the Marches and founded the colonies of Senigallia (*Sena Gallica*, 289 B.C.) and Rimini (*Ariminum*, 268 B.C.) They strengthened the city of Arezzo, already a Roman colony since 311 B.C., and unsuccessfully besieged again by the Etruscans and Gauls in 284 B.C.

On the Adriatic front, they also founded the colony of Hadria in 286 B.C., which corresponds to the present-day Atri, between Giulianova and Pescara.

The Via Salaria was built immediately, making it possible to reach Rieti. It is probable that shortly after, construction was continued as far as the Adriatic so the necessary military support could be provided to the colonies as they were gradually founded along the coast. The Via Salaria was certainly continued as far as the upper Piceno

in 268 B.C. after the inhabitants of the area were also brought under Roman rule.

Although there are no precise historic references, it is likely that during the first half of the 3rd century B.C., the Romans had already either built or improved a road in the northeast, towards the new colonies of Senigallia and Rimini, probably retracing a route towards the Apennines, used by the Umbrian and Latin populations.

However, history only dates the construction of this road as far as Rimini by the consul, Gaius Flaminius, to just 220 B.C. The road is named the Via Flaminia after its builder, although G. Flaminius probably just straightened and improved an existing road. The date 220 B.C. refers to the period when the road was completed.

Also in the north, towards Chiusi (and at least as far as Arezzo), the Romans used an Etruscan track which they must have already converted into a road during the first years of the 3rd century B.C. to penetrate into the heart of Etruria, again to create fast communication with Rome.

Although construction of the Via Cassia by the consul, Caius Cassius Longinus³ officially started in 200 B.C., this may have been the year when he ordered the existing *glarea* road to be paved. It appears that the road was paved as far as the XXI mile from Rome, as far as Veio, where the road branched off to the left, onto the Via Clodia, an ancient Etruscan road to Saturnia, which the Romans began to pave in 225 B.C.

Roman penetration along the Tyrrhenian coast of Etruria in 273 B.C. was secured in 273 B.C. with the foundation of the port colony of Cosa, in front of the Argentario. Also in this circumstance, a pre-existing road was used. It was later straightened and improved in 241 B.C. by the consul, Caius Aurelius Cotta, after whom the road was named (*via Aurelia Vetus*).

1.5 - The wars in Magna Graecia (290-272 B.C.)

While conquering Etruria, Umbria and the Marches, the Romans started to expand their territories towards

³ Some historians believe that the Via Cassia was built no earlier than 171 B.C.

Magna Graecia. Worried about the Roman intrusion, the inhabitants of Taranto asked Pyrrhus king of Epirus for help, who landed in Italy in 290 B.C. and waged a war with alternating outcomes⁴, until he was finally defeated in 275 B.C. in *Maleventum* (later called *Beneventum*).

With the final submission of Taranto, in 272 B.C., Roman domination spread throughout southern Italy as far as the Straights of Messina, consolidated with the foundation of Paestum in 268 B.C. and Brindisi in 244 B.C. Following the foundation of these colonies, to link Brindisi to Rome, the Via Appia was continued to Benevento, Venosa (a colony founded in 291 B.C.) and then Taranto.

The Via Appia, the oldest Roman road, subsequently became the most important for trade with the eastern provinces of the Empire (*regina viarum*). It features the fundamental construction principles of every Roman consular road; it heads directly towards its destination covering the shortest possible distance, or rather, it follows a straight line.

Thus, when Claudius “*the Blind*” started to construct the Via Appia from Rome to Capua, he avoided the pre-existing and unpractical route of the Via Latina⁵ and, without being at all preoccupied about crossing the Pontine marshes (overcome by constructing high embankments); he proceeded to build very long stretches of straight road⁶.

Even the oldest part of the Via Appia, between Benevento and Taranto, headed directly towards its destination, ignoring both an unpractical and prehistoric ridge road towards Canosa and Metaponto, and a coastal road from Bari to Brindisi (*via Minucia*).

After Rome had conquered central and southern Italy with its brilliant military operations, it retained its power by implementing a wise political and administrative organisation which was substantially created in three ways:

- through direct government on its own territory, which in mid 3rd century,

B.C. had reached a surface area measuring 27,000 km, that is over 20% of peninsular Italy, settled by about one million Roman citizens with full rights (the urban centre of Rome already counted more or less 150,000 inhabitants);

- through the Latin colonies which were independent on an administrative level, but also closely integrated with Roman political and military administration. Inhabitants enjoyed limited political rights compared to Roman citizens.
- through federations and alliances drawn up with Italic peoples, who retained their independence but agreed to supply military aid and armies when needed.

This dominion, guaranteed by solid military power, encouraged the development of progressive economic prosperity and lively cultural effervescence. The manual labour provided by slaves, increased in great numbers by enslaving prisoners of war, gave impulse to agriculture, artisanship and production in general. The spoils of war also contributed towards increasing State funds, and the State used its funds to create public works (roads, aqueducts, temples, theatres, etc.)

2 - The first Punic war (263-241 B.C.) and the conquest of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.

It was only thanks to the military power and wealth achieved in 270-260 B.C. that Rome could sustain and win the first war against Carthage, defined by Polybius as the greatest war in the world in terms of duration, violence and the extent of operations, which involved the whole of Sicily, the east Mediterranean Sea and the lower Tyrrhenian Sea.

Hostilities began when the Romans landed in Sicily in aid of Messina, which was under siege by Hiero, an ally of the Carthaginians and who already controlled part of the area.

The Roman successes unleashed a total war

⁴ This has gone down in history as the so-called “Victory of Pyrrhus” a theoretical success, but with such losses that it can substantially be considered a defeat. In fact, in the battle of Ascoli delle Puglie, in 279 B.C., the Romans were fought off, but Pyrrhus’ army suffered such grave human loss that it was not worth the advantage of the victory in the field.

⁵ The Via Latina followed a more internal route and already linked Rome to Capua, crossing through the colony of Cales and the city of Casilinum. Because it formed a link with Casilinum, it is also called the Via Casilina.

⁶ Along the route between Rome and Terracina, today surfaced with tarmac and used by modern traffic, the road featured such long straight stretches that during the 1950’s, it was sometimes closed to traffic and used by the car racing champion, Piero Taruffi, to beat a number of world speed records with a special vehicle he built himself (the *bisiluro*).

against the Carthaginians, who had no intention of abandoning their Sicilian colonies.

The Romans needed a powerful navy to take possession of the entire island. Therefore, in the shortest possible time, they fitted out a fleet of one hundred quinqueremi warships⁷ with which the consul, Gaius Duilius, routed the Carthaginians in the waters of Milazzo in 260 B.C.

Other maritime successes followed until 255 B.C., when the Romans attempted to invade enemy territory by landing an expeditionary corps on the north African coast under the command of M. Attilius Regulus. However, this attempt failed.

The war continued on Sicilian soil, and the Carthaginians were finally defeated and forced to abandon Sicily only after the Roman victory in the naval battle near the Aegadian Islands in 241 B.C. After this, all the various peoples in Sicily were forced into submission, except in Messina and the kingdom of Syracuse. The Romans later exploited their victory in Sicily and their domination of the seas to conquer Sardinia in 238 B.C. and Corsica in the years that followed.

Therefore, from 230 to 220 B.C., Rome dominated the whole of central and southern Italy as far as the Straits of Messina, and as far as



⁷ A quinqueremi was a Roman battleship with five rows of superimposed oars; Publius tells that every quinqueremi housed 300 oarsmen and 120 soldiers.

a border line through Pisa, Fiesole, Sarsina and Rimini⁸ to the north. Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica were added after the first Punic war, as well as control of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the eastern Mediterranean.

At this point the consular roads that had already been built were:

- the Via Appia as far as Brindisi
- the Via Valeria as far as Alba Fucens (Avezzano)
- the Via Salaria as far as Hadria (Atri)
- the Via Flaminia as far as Rimini
- the Via Clodia as far as Saturnia
- The Via Cassia, practically as far as Arezzo⁹
- the Via Aurelia Vetus as far as Cosa (present-day Ansedonia facing the Argentario).

Naturally, other local roads had been built near Rome, which were named after their destination or builder (Tiberina, Laurentina, Nomentana, Tuscolana, Ardeatina, etc.)

3 - Start of the invasion of northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul) in 222 B.C. and the second Punic war (218-202 B.C.)

After the end of the first Punic war (241 B.C.), from 233 to 229 B.C., the Romans fought against the Illyrians who inhabited the coasts of Yugoslavia; they offered refuge to the pirates who infested the Adriatic sea.

Once order had been restored along the Adriatic coast and in the sea, the Romans concentrated their efforts on curbing Carthage's expansionist goals in Spain by drawing up a treaty.

Over the following years, Rome devoted its attention to the political and administrative organisation of the occupied territories; but an agricultural reform in Piceno in favour of the Latin

coloni and to the detriment of the Senone Gauls, provoked an uprising. They incited the other Gallic-Celtic tribes and joined forces with the Boi Gauls, the Gesati (originally from the Rhone valley), the Insubres and the Taurini, preparing to wage war against Rome.

The Romans sent the consul, Lucius Aemilius to Rimini, expecting the enemy to launch their attack there, and only sent a praetor to Etruria to command Sabine and Etruscan forces who had formed an alliance with Rome.

The powerful Celtic army crossed the Apennines, and near Fiesole¹⁰, clashed with the Etruscan and Sabine armies who failed to put up enough resistance and were easily dispersed.

With such weak opposition, the Celts advanced quickly to the heart of Etruria, sacking the area as they went. They arrived in Chiusi just "*three days' march from Rome*"¹¹ and once there, learned that the Roman army stationed in Etruria was about to reach them. Having already taken abundant plunder, they decided to retreat northwards following the route they had used to advance. When contact was made with the Roman army, they pretended to retreat along the Chiana valley, thus enticing the Romans into an ambush near Fiesole. The Romans were taken by surprise, defeated, and the survivors retreated southwards, aided by Lucius Aemilius' legions, who had been defending the Adriatic front, and by Gaius Attilius Regulus' legions, who had left Sardinia and landed in Pisa.

The final battle took place in Talamone in 225 B.C., where the Gallic army was wiped out; those who were not killed were taken prisoner.

On the wave of this victory, the Romans decided to hit the Gauls on their own ground and root them out for good¹². Therefore, they penetrated Cisalpine Gaul for the very first time and in 224 B.C., defeated the Boi Gauls.

⁸ Undoubtedly at the time, Pisa, an Etruscan city, was already under the influence of Rome, even though a Roman military colony was only established in 180 B.C. The same applies to the Etruscan Fiesole, which was substantially forced into submission only in the year 200 B.C. Sarsina was conquered in 266 B.C. and became a federate city, whereas Rimini was established as a Latin colony in 268 B.C.

⁹ The date of construction of the via Cassia is just as controversial, but it must have already been an important road in 230 B.C. if one considers that it must have linked Rome to the colony of Arezzo founded at the end of the 4th century B.C.

¹⁰ Paolo Giudici: *Storia d'Italia narrata al popolo*; Published by G. Nerbini, Florence, 1930, chapter sixteen, paragraph 6.

¹¹ Polybius: *Histories*, book X, paragraphs 23, 24 and 25.

¹² Polybius: *Histories*, book II, paragraph 31: "... and this was how the most formidable Celtic attack failed, which had put all the Italics (and especially the Romans) in great and terrible danger. Given the happy outcome, the Romans hoped they could completely oust the Celts from the entire Po valley; therefore, the following year, they dispatched both the consuls against the Celts..."

In 223 B.C., under the command of Publius Furius and Gaius Flaminius, the Roman legions returned to the Po valley, crossed the river Po and conquered *Clastidium* (the present-day town of Casteggio, twenty kilometres south of Pavia) and claimed a number of victories over the Insubre Gauls. The consuls in charge the subsequent year decisively defeated the Insubre Gauls by conquering *Mediolanum*, their most important city (222 B.C.)

In 218 B.C., the Romans reinforced the occupied territory by establishing the Latin colonies of Cremona and Piacenza, which guarded either bank of the river Po.

Roman domination had just been established in Cisalpine Gaul, when Hannibal's armies descended from the Alps in autumn 218 B.C., sparking the start of the second Punic war.

The Boi and Insubre Gauls immediately rebelled against Rome and joined forces with Hannibal's army, as did other Ligurian populations¹³. The Carthaginian commander rapidly won two victories, one on the river Ticino and the other on the river Trebbia. The Roman survivors withdrew into the cities of Piacenza and Cremona, which Hannibal could not siege because he had no war machines.

Therefore, hoping that every population subdued by Rome would rebel, he descended into Etruria and again defeated the Roman legions

in 217 B.C. on Lake Trasimeno, where the consul, Gaius Flaminius lost his life.

In spite of his successes, Hannibal did not risk a siege on Rome. He knew Rome was well defended and decided to head towards the Puglie, hoping he would find new allies among the Italic peoples.

This is where he inflicted the last serious defeat on the Roman legions during the battle of Canne (216 B.C.) After this victory, numerous Italic peoples, once allies of Rome, changed sides and formed an alliance with the Carthaginians. However, the Romans managed to keep Hannibal under control in the south of Italy where he could not receive reinforcements from Carthage because he did not possess any ports on the Italian coast, nor from his brother, Hasdrubal, who died in 207 B.C. while attempting to reach his brother over land from the north.

Thus, Hannibal wandered for many years in southern Italy, where his resistance was worn down by Quintus Fabius Maximus (called the "Cunctator").

Rome on the other hand, adopted an offensive strategy in Spain, and in 204 B.C., the consul, Scipio the African received authorisation from the Senate in Rome to invade Carthaginian territory in north Africa.

In spite of Hannibal's return to Carthage, the Carthaginians were finally defeated in the famous battle of Zama in 202 B.C.

¹³ This is confirmed by Polybius (Book XV, Paragraph 11) who, describing Hannibal's preparations in view of the fight against Scipio the African in Zama in 202 B.C. states "... *Hannibal stationed over eighty elephants in front of his troops, he stationed twelve thousand mercenaries behind them: Ligurians, Gauls, Balearians and Mauretanians; behind these he lined up native Africans and Carthaginians...*"

CHAPTER II

NORTHERN ITALY IS RECAPTURED AND ROMAN DOMINATION IN CISALPINE GAUL IS CONSOLIDATED (200-188 B.C.)

Introduction

1 - The wars against the Gauls in the Po Valley and the Ligurians in the Apennines from 200 to 190 B.C.

1.1 - The war campaigns in 192 B.C.

1.2 - Significant proof that Quinctius Flaminius' legions passed through the Mugello in 291 B.C.

1.3 - The wars in 191 B.C.: Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica defeats the Boi Gauls in Bologna

2 - The years 190 and 189 B.C.: the Latin colony of *Bononia* is founded

3 - Roman dominion in central and northern Italy in 188 B.C.; existing consular roads.

Introduction

The period of history we are interested in spans 200 to 180 B.C. Thus, we carefully studied the events regarding the conquest of Cisalpine Gaul and Liguria by the Romans, searching for any useful information handed down by Latin historians (Polybius, Strabo, etc.) and able to shine light on the shady areas in Livy's account of the events in 187 B.C. which led to the construction of the military road from Bologna to Arezzo.

Although there are no direct references to the *Bononia-Arretium* road, our careful study of the twenty years from 200 to 180 B.C. did provide information useful for our research.

Given that our interest is focussed on Etruria, Cisalpine Gaul and Liguria, we did not research the contemporary Roman conquests that took place beyond Italy.

Therefore, we shall not mention the Roman military campaigns in Spain, on the Mediterranean coast of north Africa, on the Illyrian coast to the east, in the Balkans, Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor. Some of these victories were final and others temporary; they kept the Roman legions busy on distant fronts while they were still fighting the Gauls and Ligurians in Italy.

In fact, it is surprising to note that during the years 200-190 B.C., Rome tolerated the presence of dangerous and hardened enemies just 400 km from the Capital (the Boi Gauls and Ligurians), who could have threatened the metropolitan area and also have extended their hegemony up to 2-3,000 km from Rome. We believe this evidently irregular territorial expansion of Roman domination was not the consequence of a rushed imperialistic policy, but the effect of occasional military interventions, either necessary from time to time, or to safeguard Rome.

Thus, the conquest of the Salentina peninsular in 272 B.C. was the consequence of the defeat of Pyrrhus and the Tarantini, who had attacked the Romans. The same applies to the conquest of Spain and the north African coast (202 B.C.), a natural consequence of Rome's reaction to the attack by Hannibal in Italy.

The Romans also had to fight the Gauls on their own soil, as occurred during the sacking of Rome in 390 B.C., the battle of Sentino in 295 B.C. and the battle of Talamone in 225 B.C. It was after this latter victory against the Gauls that the Romans decided to penetrate Cisalpine Gaul, to weaken the Gauls for good and end their regular incursions.

Therefore, it can be said that in some cases, at least until 200-180 B.C., the expansion of Roman dominion in Italy was the chance consequence of a substantially defensive policy. Even the wars against the Ligurians were provoked by their incursions on the plain which had just been colonised by the Romans.

1 - The wars against the Gauls in the Po Valley and the Ligurians in the Apennines from 200 to 190 B.C.

The invasion of Italy by Hannibal substantially caused the territories which had already been conquered in Cisalpine Gaul to be lost, thanks to a revolt by the Gesati, Insubres, Boi etc.¹.

After the end of the second Punic war (202 B.C.), the Romans had to recapture the Po valley. This area was particularly fertile and lush, and the Romans had already established the colonies of Piacenza and Cremona here in 218 B.C.

Polybius wrote a significant description about this area in 160-150 B.C.²:

"... The fertility of this area is not easy to describe. It produces such an abundance of corn, that often in my time the price of wheat was four obols [the obol corresponded to fifteen hundredths of an aureas lira] for the Sicilian medimnus [six Roman modii, equal to 51.48 litres], and two obols for the same quantity of barley, while a metretes of wine [40 litres] cost the same as a measure of barley. Panic and millet are produced in enormous quantities. There is an abundance of acorns which grow in the forests scattered throughout the plain; just consider that while very large numbers of swine are slaughtered in Italy every year for private consumption and to feed the army, almost all are reared in the Po Valley. Food is particularly abundant and cheap as illustrated by this example: travellers seeking hospitality at

inns do not have to bargain for the price of each item they consume, but ask for the overall price per day per person. As a rule, the innkeepers ensure their guests lack nothing for half an as per day, that is the fourth part of an obol and rarely charge more than this".

During the war campaigns in the Po Valley, the Romans not only fought against the Gauls who had been living there for a number of centuries but also against the Ligurians who lived along a broad stretch of the Apennines as far as the Ligurian coast to the west and beyond the Mugello to the south. Although in the past the Ligurians had been enemies of the Gauls and Romans alike, they sided with the Gauls against the Romans when the Romans were busy recapturing Cisalpine Gaul.

Thus, the Romans were forced to fight on two fronts and were undoubtedly reluctant to fight against the Ligurians, considering there was no economic advantage in conquering their land which was impervious, poor in terms of food and plunder. Furthermore, they considered the Ligurians more barbaric than the Gauls because split into numerous mountain tribes which had no cultural tradition and who were illiterate (*Ligures omnes fallaces sunt... inlitterati, mendacesque*)³, and totally lacking any political or military organisation that could offer any glory to the Roman legions who would have defeated them. They considered them more of a nuisance than a serious threat. In fact, these mountain people were mainly content to carry out incursions into the lowland areas at the foot of the mountains, looting what they could before retreating up the mountains. The Romans liked to line their legions up in the field, ready to face the enemy; therefore they found it particularly difficult and dangerous to pursue the enemy into these valleys⁴.

¹ Polybius: *Histories*, book III, paragraph 40: "the Gauls called Boi, had long been waiting for an opportunity to break their allegiance to the Romans, but had never had a suitable chance. Now encouraged and confident at the news of the imminent arrival of the Carthaginians, they rebelled against the Romans..."

² Polybius: *Histories*, book II, paragraph 15

Polybius was born in Megalopolis in Greece in 200 B.C. Thanks to his friendship with Quintus Fabius Maximus and Scipio Aemilianus he moved to Rome in 168 B.C. where he settled. He wrote his "Histories" from 160-140 B.C. He died in 118 B.C.

³ Marcus Porcius Cato: *Origines*, II, 1.

Nino Lamboglia⁵, an expert in Ligurian civilisation, made the following analysis about the social organisation of the Ligurians: “Ancient scribes state that the internal constitution of the Ligurian tribes did not develop evolved forms of urban agglomeration, especially in the mountain areas; they were organised into *vicos et castella*. This type of structure was still visible and effective in the *pagi* during the Roman era. In Liguria, the *pagi* formed the territorial framework that survived until the Middle Ages. Many *pagi* formed a *conciliabulum*, which could *coniurare* (in Livy’s words), that is form a confederation and unite in the face of an internal or external threat. Thanks to this solid organisation which clung to the mountains and which was moulded by the landscape, the eastern Ligurians (the Apuani, Friniates, Tigullii or any others whose name remains unknown to us), formed a bulwark which for many years proved to be invincible against the superior power of the Roman legions.

According to ancient historians, after 200 B.C., the Romans were often forced to fight the Gauls and the Ligurians at the same time, employing the legions of two consuls.

Already in 197 B.C., while the consul Cornelius Cethegus was fighting against the Insubres and Cenomani, the other consul, Minucius Rufus was fighting the Ligurians. In 194 B.C., the two consuls in charge also fought battles at the same time against the Boi Gauls and the Ligurians.⁶

1.1 - The war campaigns in 192 B.C.

In 192 B.C., Quintus Minucius fought against the Apuani Ligurians in Pisa and defeated them.

Livy tells of the event⁷ “... *From that moment, Minucius did not give the enemy any respite. He left Pisa, reached Liguria and razed their*

strongholds and villages to the ground. Here the Romans were able to take back the spoils that had been plundered from them in Etruria”.

This passage confirms the predatory incursions carried out by the Ligurians in northern Etrurian cities (allies of Rome). Further on, Livy underlines the Roman efforts to weaken the Boi Gauls. In fact the Senate decided to send both consuls in charge against their enemies:

“...*It was decided that because there appeared to be no immediate threat from Antiochus⁸, the consuls should leave for their theatres of war; (Gneus) Domitius taking the shortest route from Rimini and Quinctius (Flamininus) through Liguria, entering the region of the Boi. The two consular armies on the march in different areas, devastated a wide area of enemy territory...*”

1.2 - Significant proof that Quinctius Flamininus’ legions passed through the Mugello in the year 192 B.C.

This brief passage by Livy provides important information for our research. First of all, it states⁹ that both consuls, Quinctius Flamininus and Gnaeus Domitius, received the order to converge on the same area, that is in Cispadania, the region of the Boi with Bononia as its capital. Livy points out the Gnaeus Domitius left Rimini and headed for Bologna along a road that existed before the consular Via Emilia was built and which probably wound its way along the edge of the Po valley, near the initial spurs of the pre-Appennine hills.

Instead, the other consul passed through Liguria to reach the established meeting point, with the obvious intention of attacking the Boi Gauls from behind.

⁴ At times the Ligurians risked more demanding incursions, they attacked the colony of Piacenza and occupied the city of Modena (in Roman possession but not yet a colony), they posed such a threat to Tyrrhenian coast and the upper Po Valley that the Romans hurriedly rebuilt Genoa as their base for military operations in the north (T. Livius, “History of Rome”, book XXX paragraph 1).

⁵ Nino Lamboglia: “Punti di vista sui Liguri orientali dopo le scoperte di Chiavari”, page 1 (Extract from the *Giornale Storico della Lunigiana* – new series, year XII, numbers 1-4 January-December 1961).

⁶ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXIV, paragraph 43.

⁷ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXV, paragraph 21.

⁸ Antiochus III, from the Seleucid dynasty, carried out military operations in Asia Minor and occupied Thrace in 196 B.C.

⁹ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXV, paragraph 22.

The Roman historian does not mention the point of departure of the other consul, Quintus Flaminius; however it can be presumed that he either set off from Pisa (a departure point used in former years by the legions to launch attacks on the Ligurian tribes), or from another base in Liguria which could have been Arezzo or Fiesole. Anyway, Livy mentions how, in order to reach the territory of the Boi Gauls, he passed through Liguria and devastated everything he came across on the way (these areas were not those travelled through by Gnaeus Domitius and, therefore, were not in Emilia). It can be presumed that the consul, Quintus Flaminius, chose the most practical and safest route to reach his colleague in Bologna. Thus, after leaving Pisa, he must have crossed the Apennines across the Collina pass along the Pistoia-Porretta Terme axis, and then descended along the valley of the river Reno. If he set out from Arezzo or Fiesole, he must have crossed the Apennines using the Futa pass, along a very ancient Etruscan route through Mugello, and then descended directly to Felsina along the watershed between the rivers Setta and Savena. This second itinerary appears the most probable because:

- a) the Pistoia-Collina pass-Reno valley route passed through an area controlled by Friniates and Apuani Ligurians, well known to the Romans as very bellicose tribes. In their campaign against the Boi Gauls, they did not intend to lose time to fight other people. Therefore it was more convenient for Quintus Flaminius to cross the Apennines further south-east, passing through the land of the Mucelli Ligurians (in the present-day Mugello) who were probably weaker and less bellicose than the Apuani and Friniates, considering that the Latin historians never mention them playing a lead role in any battles against Rome.
- b) a comparison between these military operations and the later operations in 187 B.C. between the Ligurians and the consuls, M. Aemilius Lepidus and C. Flaminius shows that only the Friniates and Apuani Ligurians are mentioned during the battles¹⁰

whereas the Mucelli Ligurians¹¹ (who had settled in the present-day Mugello), are not. From this circumstance it is possible to presume that in 192 B.C., the consul Quintus Flaminius quickly passed through the Mugello devastating the area with ease and without setting up any military garrisons. During the years that followed, this omission probably allowed the Apuani Ligurians to come to the aid of the surviving Mucelli and also occupy this area of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennine, which then forced in 187 B.C. M. Aemilius Lepidus to recapture the area. However, to avoid making the same mistake as Flaminius, this second time around the Romans decided to police the pass permanently, building a transapennine road which directly linked the stronghold of Fiesole and the colony of *Bononia*, recently established in 189 B.C.

1.3 - The wars in 191 B.C.: Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica defeats the Boi Gauls in Bologna

The year 191 B.C. also saw two important events.

One concerns the assault by the Ligurians against the camp of the proconsul, Quintus Minucius, who presided over the area around Pisa; he beat off the attack without following them to their villages. This solely defensive strategy did not weaken the Apuani Ligurians, as we shall see later on, and Quintus Minucius' strategy was criticised by the Senate.

The other event was the continuation of the battles against the Boi Gauls. During the year, Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica was appointed consul of Cispadania, with the precise aim of weakening the Boi Gauls for good.

He stationed his legions in Castenaso¹² near Bologna, where he camped for two months waiting for the spring and then fought against the Boi Gauls. The outcome was a great victory for the Romans which finally forced their centuries-old enemy, the Boi Gauls into submission. He then confiscated

¹⁰ In fact Livy mentions that a decisive battle took place on mount "Ballistam" (mount Balestra) on the Tuscany-Emilia border north of the Futa pass, where the upper Mugello ends (T. Livius, "History of Rome" book XXXIX paragraph 2).

¹¹ The exact name of this tribe is controversial: some call them the "Magelli".

¹² The place name "Castenaso" probably comes from *Castrum Nasicae*.

half of their territory “... so the Roman people could send colonies there if they wanted...”¹³.

In effect, the land was distributed among the Latin colonies when, two years later, *Bononia* was founded.

However, at the end of this brilliant success by Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, Livy relates a very important episode which is worth pointing out. He confirms that the Romans continued to fight against the Ligurians for many years to come because he tells that Scipio Nasica, convinced that he would be awarded a triumph by the Senate for this important military success, demobilised his troops and agreed to meet them in Rome.

However¹⁴: “...The tribune of the plebe, Publius Sempronius Blaesus thought that Scipio (Nasica) should not be denied the honour of a triumph, but that it should be deferred to a later date. The tribune explained that conflicts against the Ligurians were invariably linked to conflicts against the Gauls, because being neighbours the two tribes usually helped each other. It would have been possible to end the conflict with the Ligurians if Publius Scipio had either himself entered Liguria with his army after defeating the Boi in battle, or if he had sent some of his troops to help Quintus Minucius, held up for more than two years in an inconclusive war... (ceteris omissis). The Consul's response to this was that he had not been sent to fight in Liguria, that he had not been at war against the Ligurians and that he was not asking to celebrate a victory over them”.

The tribune's opinion expresses the mood that hovered around Rome regarding the many years and persistent battles against the Ligurians. It was certainly not fear, but rather unease about the drawn out war against these wild and barbaric people. Moreover, it was to end this unease that four years later (in 187 B.C.), the Senate sent both consuls in charge to fight against the Ligurians¹⁵.

2 – The years 190 and 189 B.C. The foundation of the Latin colony of *Bononia*

Once the Boi Gauls were defeated, Scipio Nasica secured peace throughout Cispadania, finally allowing Rome to consolidate its dominion.

The colonies of Piacenza and Cremona were strengthened and repopulated (the number of inhabitants had dropped due to war, illness and emigration).



Roman paving in Bologna discovered at the start of Strada Maggiore during excavation work to lay underground piping (November 1981).

¹³ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXVI, paragraph 39.

¹⁴ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXVI, paragraph 39-40.

¹⁵ For more information about this war, please consult chapter III.

Then the Senate decided to found a Latin colony in Bononia¹⁶: “*in that same year, on 30 December¹⁷, a Latin colony was founded in Bononia by the triumvirs, Lucius Valerius Flaccus, Marcus Atilius Serranus and Lucius Valerius Tappo pursuant to a senatus consultum. Three thousand men were involved in its foundation, cavalrymen were granted seventy jugers¹⁸ each and the other coloni were granted fifty. The land had been taken from the Boi Gauls, who had in turn driven away the Etruscans...*”.

Once the families of the Latin coloni finally settled in Bologna, they integrated with the defeated Boi tribes, encouraging them to help establish large farms prone to flooding and mainly covered by woodland.

Therefore, the area was not only subjected to military occupation but was also settled by coloni who farmed the land, raised farm animals (especially pigs) and worked as craftsmen, covering a total area of about 40,000 hectares, equal to 8,000 centuries (that is 400 square kilometres).

At the same time, ignoring the presence of the insignificant Boi city, the *cardo maximus* (north-south axis) and the *decumanus maximus* (east-west axis) of *Bononia* were established.

The *cardo maximus* coincided with an ancient track which descended from the hills (now Via Val D'Aposa - Via Venezian) and came from Etruria. At a right angle, the *decumanus maximus* (now Via Ugo Bassi - Via Rizzoli)

probably ran along a former track that skirted the edge of the plain, on the spurs of the hills¹⁹.

3 - Roman dominion in central and northern Italy in 188 B.C.; existing consular roads.

After the end of the second Punic war, the recapture of Cisalpine Gaul ended in 188 B.C., when Rome conquered the whole of Etruria, Cispadania (present-day Emilia) and Transpadania (present-day Lombardia) once and for all. Rome also took control of the Veneto, its traditional ally in the east, and so bordered with the Friuli and Venezia Giulia areas. Westwards, Rome only controlled the Ligurian coast and Genoa in particular, rebuilt by the Romans in 202 B.C. after its destruction at the hands of the Carthaginians in 205 B.C.

The Apennines from the west Ligurian Riviera to Mugello continued to escape Roman dominion. The Romans had still not managed to defeat the Ligurians once and for all, in spite of the numerous wars fought during the former decade.

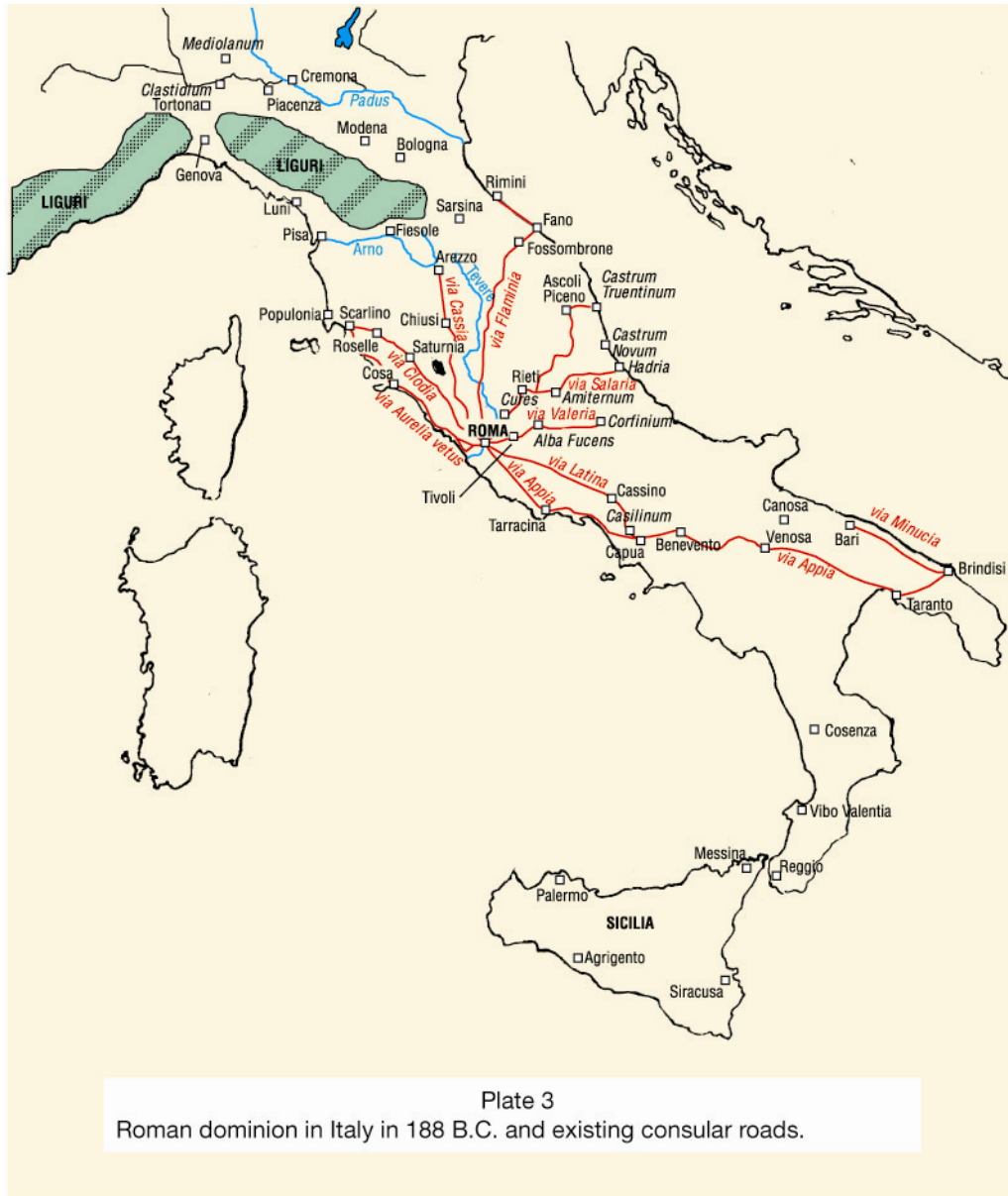
They could not bear to have this thorn in their side because it was a constant threat to the peaceful development of entire Cisalpine Italy and northern Etruria.

¹⁶ T. Livius: *History of Rome*, book XXXVII, paragraph 57.

¹⁷ Was this December 190 or 189 B.C.? The prevailing opinion of historians is that it was the year 189. However, according to Scullard (Rom. Pol. page 285), it was 190.

¹⁸ The “juger” measured 2,500 square metres. Therefore, cavalrymen were assigned 17.5 hectares and other coloni were assigned 12.5 hectares. This calculation is based on the supposition that there were 500 cavalrymen and 2,500 other coloni.

¹⁹ Other roads were subsequently built, thus forming a perfectly square road grid. During construction of the pedestrian subway on the via Ugo Bassi - Via Indipendenza crossroad, the impressive remains of large paving stones made of trachyte were discovered. When the city was founded, the road surface was made of local materials (pebbles and gravel); the paving subsequently underwent numerous renewals, but only a few roads in the centre were laid with large paving stones made of trachyte from the Euganei Hills. This is confirmed in the report by J. Ortalli, from the Archaeological Superintendency for Emilia and Romagna (“Strade di Bologna romana, tipologia e topografia” in ‘Strenna storica bolognese’, XXIV, 1984). Ortalli highlights how the use of large trachyte paving stones was limited to just a few roads of the city centre. It is worth quoting his description of the Roman paving discovered in Strada Maggiore: “*Following excavations carried out to lay pipelines, numerous remains of the eastern suburban stretch of the Via Aemilia were discovered. Starting from Via Castiglione, up to fifteen metres east of the crossroads with Via Guido Reni, the road was paved with the usual large trachyte paving stones, which at this point stopped and were joined against a 40 cm wide “drop-in slab or guide” which can be interpreted as a stone containment kerb perpendicular to the road axis: beyond this limit, the road continued eastwards along the same axis for the first 15 metres, paved with large river cobbles and then with a roadbed of river gravel 30-40 cm deep*” (work cited, page 290).



With the very recent foundation of *Bononia* The Romans obviously intended to set up a permanent garrison at a vital crossroads for trade from Rimini, Piacenza and Fiesole. Even in Etruscan times, the Tuscan city of Fiesole was a crucial point for trade from Etruria heading towards Felsina and the Adriatic ports in the Po Valley.

Even after the Gaul invasion, the once Etruscan Felsina must have preserved its privilege of being the final destination of the transapennine track from Etruria, where extensive trade took place, causing Fiesole and Felsina to flourish.

Now that Bologna was theirs, the Romans could not tolerate that the link to Etruria could be made impassable by hostile tribes.

The work to build the northern consular roads (suspended during the second Punic war), had not restarted because of the military effort required by the wars against the Gauls and the frequent incursions by the Ligurians. Obviously, when conquering Cisalpine Gaul, the Roman legions exploited the existing local road network, which was more or less practicable but certainly did not comply with their requirements. Once the conquest had been completed, it was necessary to build proper roads which would penetrate into Cisalpine Gaul and

form a fast link to Rome through Etruria, as soon as possible. On the Adriatic side, the Via Flaminia consular road ended in Rimini, while in Etruria, the Via Cassia reached as far as Arezzo, on the Tyrrhenian side, the Via Aurelia ended in

Salebro (now Scarlino), near Follonica.

Therefore, these roads had to be extended northwards to link the newly conquered areas with Rome; and this is exactly what happened in the year 187 B.C.